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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of the student affairs administrator as a decision maker in the development and budgets within the organizational system of the university. A basic premise for the model at Temple University is that the role of the administrator is a key factor in solving those conflicts arising from human elements within the organization. Two theoretical models, developmental and systems, utilized by practitioners in Student Affairs at Temple to build and justify programs are presented and critiqued. The need for a third model, interactive, is suggested as a means for understanding and resolving human conflicts resulting from the inherent interaction of the developmental and systems orientation . (VG)

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MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS and the Role of the Student Affairs Administrator

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MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS: And The Role Of The Student Affairs Administrator

by Irene G. Casper and Ruth A. Morey

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of the Student Affairs administrator as a decision-maker in the development of programs and budgets within the University as an organizational system. A basic premise is that the role of the administrator is a key factor in solving the conflicts that arise from human elements within the organization; these conflicts often go unnoticed and/or are not dealt with in building programs and budgets. We take our cue from Getzels who states: "administration is a social process"(1958). Two theoretical models, developmental and systems, utilized by practitioners in Student Affairs to build and justify programs will be presented and critiqued. The need for a third model, interactive, will be suggested as a means for understanding and resolving human conflicts resulting from the inherent interaction of the developmental and systems orientation.

Student Affairs administrators base their existence within the University upon the need for an approach to the development of the 'total' student. Brown (1970) builds a rationale for this approach and Chickering (1971), Maslow (1970), and others provide the tools to build developmental models from which Student Affairs professionals have taken their cues. Research studies (Feldmann and Newcomb, 1969) have shown that the college years are important periods of growth physically, emotionally, and intellectually with most learning occuring outside the classroom within the

total environment. Student Affairs administrators have worked to structure that environment to remove blocks from the developmental process of the student which enhances the potential for success within the university.

Recently these administrators have been asked to legitimize the funding of these programs, to show accountability in terms of cost analyses, objective setting and zero based budgeting. This need to demonstrate a rationale for the existence of Student Affairs programs and budget within an institution of higher learning has given rise to the realization that processes are needed to gather information systematically and evaluate programs in terms of desired outcomes. These outcomes are designed to meet the needs of the student and the university. Perhaps the most complete application of these ideas to date is presented by Richard L. Harper, "Planning, Budgeting, and Evaluation in Student Affairs Programs: A Manual for Administrators". NASPA Journal, Summer, 1976. Harper integrates the principle questions and phases of management tools into a workable model for Student Affairs administrators.

However, when the outcomes one desires must meet both the developmental needs of the student and the needs of the institution a conflict often develops. Such conflicts may surface in examples such as the recent case study which was explored at the 1976 ACE-NASPA Institute:

> As chief personnel officer you have been asked to set up an accountability system within Student Affairs. You have asked your staff to work through 'management by objectives' and develop a unified concept of objectives and measures of accountability. Everyone has been trained in writing the objectives. When you meet to discuss them people respond that their objectives are difficult to state or formulate in a behavioral manner since it involves the on-going development of the student and certainly cannot be quantified.

What is operating here is an example of persons using different models of orientation toward the problem. Each of us may be utilizing different assumptions in structuring the environment. When a problem arises we respond from an entirely different approach - the goals are different and not often congruent. The characteristics and assumptions inherent in the Developmental and Systems Models are discussed in the following section.

DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL vs. SYSTEMS MODEL

Student Affairs programs generally are oriented toward the use of a developmental model as a philosophical base for policy development in meeting student needs. The university or college and the chief administrative officer of Student Affairs uses a systems model to look at the structure of the organization, the effectiveness of the programs and the legitimacy of the budget. Both models have certain assumptions inherent in their operation.

Developmental Model:

The target or focus for a developmental model is directed towards our client population, the student. The characteristics of a developmental model are described by Chin (1961) as:

> 1. assumes change; 2. there are noticeable differences between the states of the (individual) at different times; 3. the succession of these states implies that the system is heading somewhere; and 4. there are orderly processes which explain how (the individual) gets from its present state to wherever it is going - with an increase in value accompanying the achievement of a new state.

Developmental models help the practitioner or student affairs administrator develop policy and/or programs by providing a time perspective ----"a directional (goal or objective) focus for analysis and action -- one can clarify

thoughts and refine observations about directions, states in the developmental process, forms of progression, and forces causing these events to occur over a period of time" (Chin, 1961). In turn the Student Affairs administrator can employ this model to state behavioral objectives for programs affecting the student.

The weakness of the developmental model is the difficulty in quantifying what are qualitative growth factors in an individual (the student). The developmental model is a time perspective model and has as a frame of reference forces which contribute to change over time. Such change is not always definable at the moment - rather it is directional in nature. As Chin (1961) states in the developmental model "no uniformity exists in the definition and operational identification of such successive states." Therefore, it is difficult for the Student Affairs administrator to quantify or operationalize what is justifiable budgetarily within his or her area. Accountability procedures within institutions demand a "here and now" analysis. The orientation of the developmental model is to look at the structure of the organization as a means to meet the developmental needs of the student - each of whom is unique and autonomous from the organization in terms of their needs. The change function of the organization or university should relate to the removal of blocks within the university that hinder the student from continuing the phases or stages of growth. This orientation makes it difficult to resolve conflicts where the needs of the students are different from the needs of the university. For instance the results of a data gathering process may indicate that the women students' on your campus could benefit from a developmental center geared directly to the concerns of women and their adaptation to the university environment. The establishment of such a center may present a need for support staff, facilities and

equipment. The university is asking for a cost analyses and is concerned over duplication of programs - after all doesn't the Counseling Center work with these concerns? How do you resolve the conflict?

The developmental model is descriptive. The Student Affairs administrator can describe stages of growth of students and the blocks within the university which demonstrate the discrepancy between student potential and their present stage. It is difficult to show evidence of what has been done that directly implies growth or movement since change is continual but also unique to the individual and surfaces over time. The faculty member asks, "How do you show that your student has become more self-actualized?" The budget officer asks, "How much money in staff time, hours, equipment, space, etc. per student does it take to make one more assertive?" "How does helping one develop a positive self-concept produce more retention at the university?" In the developmental system the student is the source you look for in determining programs - based on the feedback of blocks which may be occuring in the organization - you build your programs to relieve those blocks. On the other hand, the university employs the systems model to determine budget and related accountability concerns.

Systems Model:

The orientation of the systems model is a "here and now" emphasis for the organization. What are the conditions within the structure which makes the organization stable and on-going? The systems orientation stresses an evaluative and analytical approach to the functioning of an organization in terms of concrete objectives and quantitative measures. Chin (1961) describes the characteristics of a systems model as:

1. Assumes structure or boundaries, the components of

> which are roles, acts, expectations, communications, influence and power relationships; 2. stability or equilibrium such that a tendency to achieve a balance among the various forces operating within and upon it exists; 3. arbitrarily frozen time period - where analysis relates to a here and now; 4. reacts to stress and tensions as a force for change; and 5. employs a feedback mechanism where the system can test the inputs and outputs across the boundary and how the system is affected and in turn effects the environment.

The systems model helps Student Affairs administrators justify what is included in their programs and make budget determination based upon present levels of functioning. The question is asked, if nothing else new or outside the present subunits exists what can we predict will happen to the stability of the institution? Programs and personnel are evaluated by measuring time and cost for each unit and this information is related to the present priorities of the institution. Data is gathered to categorize the target population, to assess the institutions resources to meet the needs of the population and/or to determine the tensions present internally or externally.

A major weakness in the systems model is that it does not allow for the future development of the student. Student developmental needs are not seen as interdependent but dependent upon the day to day functions of the organization. The university or college using only a systems model will move to eliminate stress or tension from the situation as a means of maintaining or regaining stability. For instance, if the residence halls are in the red and the budget officer gives clear instructions that they must break-even as a number one priority, there has been little or no thought of the needs of the student and what is needed in that environment to meet those needs. The immediate pressure to be relieved is a budget in the red. An administrator using the systems model approach would then look at the forces impinging upon the environment to remove the debt.

Another major drawback to the systems model is that since the goal of the model is reduction of tension, the source of change is the structural stress of the organization. Such stress frequently results from "built in perceptual differences as to how people see the job, misperceptions, gaps of information that may cause overlap and/or lack of coordination" (Chin, 1961). The change which results, may create a gap between the university environment or structure and the goal of the student. Title IX is an example of stress and heightened tension which is placed upon the structure of the university particularly in the area of athletics (equal scholarships, equal facilities, etc.). Alumni, students, the Board of Trustees all may have varying reactions to implementing Title IX. If the structure is changed to reduce one area of tension it may indeed heighten tension from other areas of the environment. Resolving tensions cannot be accomplished by changing the structure since the priorities of which stresses are to be resolved, cannot be easily identified.

INTERACTIVE MODEL

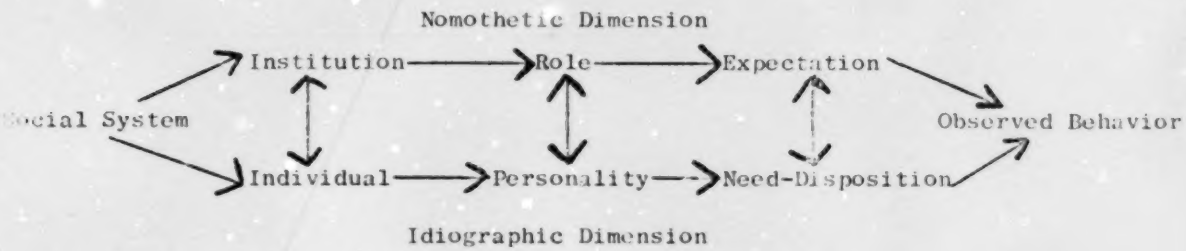
A key variable in the conflicts resulting from the use of the developmental and the systems models is the administrator or decision-maker. The administrator requires the use of a systems model to define accountability and legitimacy of program and budget and the developmental model to meet the longitudinal needs of students. To do so the administrator must have an understanding of the conceptual relationship between the role of the individual and the nature of the organization. One must accept the basic premise that the goals of the developmental model and the systems model are interrelated - not antithetical. What is needed is the development of an interactive model that studies the forces in an organization which

produce change (maintains an active feedback system) and where the direction of change is not determined, but becomes one of choice for the client system.

Getzels (1960) provides us with a theoretical framework within which one can examine such an interactive model; that is the relationship between the systems level of analysis and the developmental level of analysis. Viewing the educational institution as a social system, Getzels conceives of two elements which are independent and yet interactive. These elements are (1), the roles and expectations that relate to the goals of the institution and (2), individuals with separate personalities and need dispositions employed in the institution.

The interaction of these two elements comprise the social process of the system (higher education institution). This social process or behavior can only be understood as a function of the interrelationships of these major elements: institution, role, and expectation (nomothetic dimension); and individual, personality, and need-disposition (idiographic or personal dimension). "To understand the nature of the observed behavior - the organization and its structure - and to be able to predict and control it - one must understand the nature of the relationships of these elements (Getzels, 1960)."

Schematically the theoretical framework is shown as:



The institutional role is defined in terms of role expectations; that is, certain privileges, obligations, responsibilities and powers. These are

operative functions that must be executed in certain ways. The key here however, is that roles are occupied by individuals -- no two being alike. (What are their needs, their skills, their perceptions). Just as the organizational role has certain expectations that affect behavior, so does the dynamic organization of the individual with certain need dispositions govern his/her reactions to the environment. To understand the behavior and interaction of specific role-incumbents in an institution we must know both the role-expectations and need-disposition. The behavior seen is then, a composite deriving from personalistic sets and propensities and from institutional obligations and requirements. It is in this interactive mode that the individual attempts to cope with an environment composed of patterns of expectations for his behavior which are consistent with his own independent pattern of needs. Within the interactive mode the individual may encounter four types of conflict as defined by Getzels (1960):

1. Conflict between the cultural values of society at large and the institutional expectations; incongruity between values of role incumbent and expectations of the institution.
2. Conflict between role-expectation and personality - disposition. e.g. need for affection - role expectation one of making hard decisions.
3. Role Conflict - role incumbent is required to conform simultaneously to a number of expectations which are mutually exclusive, contradictory, or inconsistent - so that adjustment to one set of requirements makes adjustment to the other set of requirements impossible or at least difficult.
4. Personality Conflict - opposing needs and dispositions within the personality of the role incumbent as a function of unresolved discrepancies between his needs and his potentialities.

These conflicts occur for all role incumbents within the organization whether student, staff or administrator. The successful resolution of such conflicts for all persons is a major key to the effectiveness of the organizational

process. This applies to each role incumbent whether student, staff or administrator.

The relevance of the general model for administrative theory and practice becomes apparent when it is seen that the organizational process inevitably deals with the fulfillment of both nomothetic and idiographic requirements within the context of a particular social system. It should be clear now that the role of the decision-maker - how he/she perceives both the expectations of the institution and his/her own need-disposition - can cause difficulties in imposing any model of organization whether it be system, developmental or interactive to the problems of program and budget.

In order to determine how the elements of role and personality interact for an administrator in relation to a specific decision it is useful to utilize basic constructs of Kurt Lewin's Field Theory. Basically Lewin states that behavior is a function of one's perception of himself as a person and his environment [B = f (P,E)] (1951). This behavior occurs within a field of forces relating to a specific problem. These forces are perceived by the individual as being either supportive or hindering in reaching the desired goal. If an individual makes a thorough analysis of these forces and how they affect the problem at hand one will begin to discover how factors either in the environment or within his/her own personality affect the decisions or actions taken.

Based on these field theoretical principles, a step-by-step interactive model will be developed in the following section. This model can assist the administrator in making an analysis of effects of his/her behavior as it relates to resolving conflicts arising from demands of the organization to use both developmental and systems models to make decisions.

INTERACTIVE MODEL APPLICATION

Phase I: Definition of Goal

Step 1: List all positions or departments in your work environment which affect the functioning of your job.

Step 2: Select from the list resulting from Step 1 those areas you would like to develop.

State the direction or end point you would like to work towards.

Step 3: Look at the items resulting from Step 2 and ask yourself such questions as:

- Are some of the areas more susceptible to change?
- Are some more difficult to change?
- Can some be achieved by short term efforts?
- Are some long term goals?

Step 4: Taking into consideration the analysis in Step 3, prioritize the areas. Select the one which you see as the highest priority to develop. This then becomes your overall goal. Determine the priority area by asking these questions:

- What areas are exerting the greatest pressure or force to change?
- Are there areas which, if changed, could bring immediate success?
- Are some areas more accessible than others?

Phase II: Diagnosis of Goal

Diagnosis Steps:

Steps relating to individual/personal experiences, needs and organizational role:

Step 1: List all areas that you perceive within yourself (personal needs, motivations, etc.) and your perception of your role within the organization that are related to the problem or goal.

Step 2: Take each area listed in Step 1 and list all factors or reasons that support your reaching the goal. Remember these are in terms of who you are as a person - your own personal needs and your perception of your role in the organization.

Step 3: Take each area in Step 1 and list all those factors or reasons that hinder or do not support your reaching the goal.

Steps that relate to diagnosis of the organization environment

Step 4: List all subsystems (departments) internal and external to the organization that you perceive are related to or affected by accomplishing the goal.

Step 5: Take each subsystem listed in Step 4 and list the reasons you perceive that they will support the goal.

Step 6: Take each subsystem listed in Step 4 and list the reasons you perceive that they will oppose or hinder your movement toward the goal.

Phase III: Assessment of Strategy for Attaining Goal

Step 1: Look at the factors which are viewed in Phase II as supportive and hindering. Determine the importance of the factors by asking such questions as:

- Where are there conflicts between the analysis of myself and my role and the analysis of the subsystems?
- Are some reasons more forceful than others?

Step 2: Develop a list of priority steps for action resulting from your analysis in Step 1.

Consider these questions in your listing:

- Can I increase the strength of a supportive factor?
- Can I decrease the strength of a hindering factor?
- Can I change a hindering factor to a supportive factor?

Phase IV: Designing a Plan of Action

Step 1: Determine the priority step resulting from Phase III that you wish to implement. Then state this as your objective or action step. This then becomes your first step towards accomplishing the overall goal.

Step 2: Outline the information or content you need to present or what you need to obtain as the case may be.

Step 3: Outline the method or strategy which is most appropriate to obtaining your goal.

Phase V: Reassess or Evaluate Action

Step 1: Evaluate the progress you made towards achieving your overall goal by implementing the action plan developed in Phase IV.

Ask yourself such questions as:

- What were the specific outcomes of the action plan?
- What new information did you learn?
- Were you previously unaware of certain subsystems?
- How did your planning and behavior affect the action?

Step 2: Revise priority of steps for action; develop and implement next action plan towards obtaining goal.

SUMMARY

Administrators in student affairs generally accept a developmental model as a philosophical base when relating to the needs of the university client population (students). At the same time administrators are required to use the systems model for establishing accountability and maintaining stability within the organization.

Using the two different models, developmental and systems, frequently results in conflict. Decisions reflecting reaction to immediate system tension and stress may be defeating to long range student needs. For example, meeting the immediate demands of alumni and trustees for a winning football team, may or may not contribute to the long range developmental needs relating to participation in athletics by male and female students (Title IX implications).

Underlying both the orientations of system and developmental is the fact that there is always an interactive process between the human resources and the organizational structure. This is what we have described as an

interactive model. The dimensions within the model are (1) nomothetic including institution, role and expectations and (2) idiographic including individual, personality, and need-disposition. Each role incumbent within the organization whether student, staff, trustee, etc. has factors relating to these dimensions functioning and interrelating in affecting their behavior.

As a major decision-maker affecting others, it is essential that the administrator carefully analyze the interactive consequences of the role and personality dimensions for his/her own behavior. Which dimension of your behavior, role expectation or personality needs makes a greater contribution to the specific decisions you make? How? When? - - Toward this end we recommend a step-by-step application of the interac ive model to an analysis of your own behavior.

An example of the implications of the use of the step-by-step model may be seen in the following example. Students have come to you requesting that some additional space in the residential complex be redesigned for program use. Even though you know the university is under considerable financial constraints your response to the students is supportive. You do this in a manner that leads them to believe in all probability you will be able to meet their request, in fact you tell them you have gathered data concerning the project and have an appointment to talk with the vice president to discuss the problem. (You like students to think you are supportive, believe in the need for the project and toward this end you are thoroughly prepared for your appointment.) The vice president immediately starts discussing his budget concerns. You begin to feel overwhelmed by his presenting such a "clear, reasonable" case before you have a chance

to even discuss why you are there. Since you have a strong need to be seen as supportive and agreeable by top administrators you agree that indeed it is unreasonable for any one of the deans to make plans for new developments. Thus you eventually leave the conference without presenting your proposal, faced with having to tell the students "no". (Your own need to be seen as supportive by your superiors - frequently taking the behavioral form of not disagreeing or initiating ideas, seemed to take priority in the conference.)

This brief case demonstrates how when relating with one group (in this case students), the individual administrator was able to integrate both personal needs and role or organizational expectations in making a decision about a request. On the other hand when "on the spot" pressures began to occur - (conference not going as you had expected, logical ideas, feelings about subordinate role) - the personal needs of the administrator had priority in making the decision.

Student Affairs administrators are now employing the tools learned from business and industry. These tools systematically categorize and show how to obtain data; give methods to make operational decisions from this data; and suggest a structure within which short and long range decisions can be made. The content and direction or intent of these structured analyses is the development of the student within an educational setting. The next step, as we have discussed here is to help the decision-maker learn what questions to ask and what forces are at play in the environment to make those questions and their answers viable. It is the thorough understanding of the inherent needs and perceptions of the various role incumbent within the particular environment (institutional setting) which have the greatest influence on decisions and environmental forces which are

at play in the decision-making process will help an administrator learn the consequences of what data gathered, how it is utilized and toward what end or direction.

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